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STATE FOR S/CT (WORMAN/HAWTHORNE), NEA/I (OLSON/EVANS) AND  
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CG](#) [XA](#) [XF](#) [XG](#) [XI](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN FIGHTERS TO IRAQ ARE A MAJOR FRENCH CONCERN

REF: A. STATE 35709

[B](#). 05 PARIS 8442

[C](#). 05 PARIS 8088

[D](#). 05 PARIS 6579

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS  
ONS 1.4 B/D

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Since 2004, French counterterrorism authorities have focused on the threat posed by foreign fighters going to Iraq. For those departing France for Iraq, the GOF fears that they will become hardened and experienced terrorists, and will eventually return to France to plan attacks on French soil. GOF concern in this matter is evidenced in virtually all high-level USG-GOF security-related meetings, the most recent being a meeting March 2 in Paris between Attorney General Gonzales and Pierre Bousquet de Florian, the head of the DST (France's internal security service). Both agreed that the current in-depth level of cooperation between the U.S. and France on the issue of foreign fighters to Iraq is of vital importance to both countries. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S) In September 2004, the Paris Prosecutor's office opened an investigation into "jihadists to Iraq" and assigned it to counterterrorism investigating judges Jean-Louis Bruguiere and Jean-Francois Ricard. The open-ended investigation continues to this day, and ensures that all available police, intelligence and judicial assets can be used to collect information on this threat. The first arrests in this investigation occurred on January 26, 2005, when French police arrested eleven people (three of whom were eventually charged with terrorism conspiracy) in Paris' 19th arrondissement. Those charged were accused of recruiting young French residents to fight jihad in Iraq. On April 24, 2005, French police arrested Said al-Maghrebi, an Afghanistan training camp veteran, on suspicion of setting up a recruitment ring to fight jihad in Iraq. In addition, French police arrested six people on November 29, 2005, on suspicion of financing terrorist causes, including recruiting jihadists to fight in Iraq. French officials stated in November 2005 that 22 young people had left France for Iraq, and at least seven had been killed there, including two suicide bombers. Further details contained in refs B, C and D.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Security and judicial services from the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Defense have consistently told Embassy interlocutors that they view jihadists to Iraq as a major threat. Judge Jean-Francois Ricard (strictly protect) told Poloff March 6 that the jihadists to Iraq investigation continues to be the top priority for the terrorism investigating judges. The arrests cited in para 2 are just the tip of the iceberg: GOF security services also closely monitor residents of France with any ties to "jihadists to Iraq" networks.

14. (S/NF) In addition to the daily work of the GOF's counterterrorism community, policymakers recently identified areas for improvement to more effectively investigate and monitor potential jihadists to Iraq. For example, the recently passed counterterrorism law (ref B), allows the GOF to monitor flights to countries of concern, including Syria and Egypt. (Note: Although such monitoring occurred prior to passage of the law, those services conducting the monitoring now have a solid legal standing to do so. End note.) At the strategic level, PM Villepin and his cabinet approved on March 7 a White Book on terrorism that defines the government's understanding and approach towards what it considers to be an "aggravated threat." The White Book refers to jihadists to Iraq as one of the major terrorist threats to France.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

Stapleton